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WATCHET URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, 1948

My report for 1948 is I fear a dull one, consisting mostly of statistics. Under present conditions it cannot be otherwise, unless we are afflicted with an epidemic of disease or food poisoning.

There is a good deal in our town which is capable of improvement, most particularly in housing, but there is, I am afraid, nothing which would justify my putting it forward as a matter of immediate urgency, however much those concerned may consider it so, and however much I sympathise with them.

We did not have such a severe drought in 1948 as in 1947, and so the condition of the river was a trifle less critical. I understand that the Wansbrough Paper Mills are doing their best in the face of difficulties.

It is a little difficult to know exactly what comes within the province of the Medical Officer of Health. Health is not entirely a physical matter, it has its psychological side, and the appearance of the river running through the town is an abomination. I have seen visitors go to look over the wall in Market Street - a slightly romantic ruined cottage flanked by a filthy sewer, - I have heard their comments.

The condition of the public convenience at the West end of the Harbour is most unsatisfactory, though we are greatly indebted to the Harbour Master and his staff for doing their best with it - painting and whitewash. The floor is porous and the place is open to the air down a funnel of high wall. I believe the ownership of this is in question.

Several times the beach at the back of Jubilee terrace has been in a most unpleasing state - cabbage stalks - old tins and bottles, etc., similar things have been tipped into the stream.

We have now, as you know, another small industry in the town.

One very satisfactory item was the improvement of the ice cream towards the end of last year. That produced by two local makers was grade 1 - better than some of that imported.

The condition of the water has been good, but once or twice over chlorinated - this should be remedied, food is poor enough at present without this addition.

The health of the town I can only describe as fair - the official statistics do not tell us much about this, but as a family doctor I am pretty well able to judge. The amount of skin disease is still increasing, as is digestive trouble. I attribute these directly to the long and continuing price of malnutrition and strain. A small, almost invisible infected injury is more than likely to lead to a generalised dermatitis and often a dermatitis occurs without even this excuse. Convalescence from a minor ailment still takes three or four weeks instead of one.

We must be very grateful to recent vast advances in treatment, even though that is the wrong end of the stick - the disease still occurs, we have not the means by the ordinary conditions of curing to reduce it.

TUBERCULOSIS

The number of Tuberculosis cases on the register is:-

Men 20.

Women 14.

Notifications for the year were Pulmonary Tuberculosis 11,
Non Pulmonary Tuberculosis 1. Deaths from Pulmonary Tuberculosis

3, ages 5, 26 and 56.

Scarlet Fever. 4 cases - this little epidemic was very mild, not as severe as the average measles.

Measles. 1 case - We had last year much less measles in the Watchet Urban Area than in the country round, but I cannot help thinking that a number of notifications must have gone astray!

The total number of deaths was 35.

The total number of births was 27.

(sgd) Myles Tonks.

Medical Officer of Health. Watchet U.D.C.

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